

KY Tech News

the electronic magazine for career and technical education

June/July 2006

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Technical Education**

**2006 SkillsUSA
State Conference**

**Ford/AAA Student
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Did You Know?

Student Spotlights

The Changing Tide in Technical Education

Three new ATCs get set to open to a new day in technical education.

By: Tim Thornberry

Beginning in the 2006 fall semester, three new state area technology centers (ATC) will open across the Commonwealth. Warren, Pulaski and Butler Counties will each open new facilities to hundreds of students and while, externally these schools bring with them traditional course studies such as welding, carpentry and automotive technology, internally they reflect the new technology that has transformed those classes into modern state-of-the-art applied technology labs; the vocational education of today.

The history of what we now refer to as career and technical education (CTE) goes back to the 1800's when secondary schools were being established in this country. The argument of the day was "should students receive a classical or practical education?" That argument led to the birth of vocational education, which was implemented by way of the Smith-Hughes Vocational Education Act signed by President Woodrow Wilson on February 23, 1917.

Today, according to the U.S. Department of Education, "virtually every high school student takes at least one vocational education course, and one in four students take three or more courses in a single program area. Also, one-third of college students are involved in vocational programs, and as many as 40 million adults engage in short-term postsecondary occupational training."

Currently 55 state ATCs and their satellite programs serve over 70% of the 176 local school districts across the state. More than 18,000 students are enrolled in 25 different program areas including computer technology based courses such as networking, computer repair, web design and geographic information systems (GIS), 35 information technology programs and 68 health sciences programs, just to name a few.

Don Evans, a 23 year veteran of the technical education field will serve as principal at one of the new schools, the Warren County ATC in Bowling Green. Evans is no stranger to administration, as he just finished a stint as principal at the nearby Russellville ATC. He also has postsecondary experience at the community and technical college level as well.

"The ATCs are much needed bridges between post-secondary technical education, industry and secondary education," he said. "One of our jobs as a school will be to connect these graduating high school students to the workforce or on for more training at post-secondary level through program areas that are in demand in Warren County and its surrounding areas. These traditional and service oriented programs include the latest technology and emphasize computer skills as well as writing and math. This school will be state-of-the art in both facilities and equipment."

Beth Hargis and Eric Keeling will serve as principals at the two other new schools, Pulaski Co. ATC in Somerset and Butler Co. ATC in Morgantown, respectfully.

Hargis comes from the local secondary school district and Keeling comes from the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS.)

"Job skills are an essential part of the students' learning processes in obtaining their career and academic goals," said Hargis. "As CTE educators, we will strive to assist students in understanding careers available to them and work with them in goal setting that will lead them to either higher education or job opportunities."

"Our first goal is to support the local high school," said Keeling. "The second goal is to provide industry training for local business and industry and finally, we will work to enhance the community education program. We are working closely with the high school to utilize the curriculum in a way that meets their needs and the community education program to inspire a thirst for continuing education."

Career and technical education and its institutions, as we now know them, have changed in many ways over the last 86 years, going from vocational schools to applied technology centers to the present day career and area technology centers but primarily, these schools have always been an avenue for students to transcend into the workforce with a viable vocation; a trade or at least the basics of that trade.

However, in an advanced technological world, vocational education is evolving from its original focus on preparing students for work immediately following high school, to focusing more and more on academic achievement and postsecondary endeavors.

The fastest-growing occupations now require some type of postsecondary education. From an incentive standpoint, statistics show that two and four year degree holders make substantially more money than those who have only a high school diploma.

Today's vocational curriculum has reflected those changes taking more academia into account. As the world has become engulfed in modern technological advances, technical education has kept track with those advances. Students are trained on computerized welders to advanced information technology programs to some of the most up to date medical equipment being used today through the help of local school districts, local economic development groups and local business and industry partners. Methods and equipment are constantly revised and updated to meet educational and business needs.

This metamorphosis isn't taking place because the schools have a different name, but because they have a different content and the fact that applied technology has over and over again proven to be beneficial in the academic classroom.

Throughout the state's technical education system, academic courses such as social studies, geometry and algebra have been integrated into program areas such as office technology, carpentry and electricity to improve the academic success of more students. Studies show that by coordinating academic concepts with the vocational subject area, the students are more likely to succeed when confronted with other academic concepts.

David Billingsley, executive director of the Office of Career and Technical Education, says one of his goals for the system is to prepare students to go beyond the old system of vocational education.

"Since 65 percent of today's occupations require some type of postsecondary education, we must properly prepare our students to be successful at that level," he said. "Business and industry leaders see a deficiency of basic academic and soft skills in today's workforce. It should be our goal to improve these skills in our students. We must use a holistic approach that integrates academic, technical and employability skills into our curriculum."

As the three new ATCs prepare to welcome students, a new era begins for career and technical education, but with 89 years of tradition.



Montgomery County student excels at state SkillsUSA conference

By: Tim Thornberry

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (April 21, 2006) - Christine Williams is a math whiz, so much so, that she serves as a tutor to other Montgomery County High School students where she is a junior. But put a band saw in her hands, and she becomes a whiz of a different kind, thanks to her wood working classes at the Montgomery Co. Area Technology Center (ATC) and a student organization known as SkillsUSA.



Christine Williams during the SkillsUSA competition

Williams was one of nearly 900 SkillsUSA members from across the state who attended the organization's state conference and program competition held April 12-15.

The national non-profit group serves over a quarter-million secondary and postsecondary students in 50 states and three U.S. territories that are enrolled in career and technical education programs. Ky. SkillsUSA members number approximately 5,600. The event is a prelude to the national conference held annually in Kansas City, MO. First place finishers in each category win the chance to compete on the national level in June.

Education Cabinet Deputy Secretary Laura E. Owens welcomed the students during opening ceremonies and told them of the coming job opportunities in the state.

"According to the Kentucky Occupational Outlook report conducted by the Office of Employment and Training, the state's economy is expected to increase by over 316,000 new jobs from 2002 through 2012," said Owens. "An additional 445,000 job vacancies will likely occur as workers leave or separate from various occupations by way of retirements, promotions, or transfers within occupations. This translates into 76,000 jobs per year through 2012 to be filled by educated and trained workers."

This year's state conference also brought more than 30 educational institutions, business and industry sponsors, and technical colleges from around the state and region together to the event to offer almost \$700,000 in scholarships and prizes.

Ky. SkillsUSA Director Steve Phillippi said this year's conference was the largest of its kind in over 10 years.

"It's been quite some time since we have had this kind of attendance at the state level and never have we had the amount of scholarship and prize money offered for our state conference," he said. "This competition gives students an opportunity to network with each other, get a look at a postsecondary education or apprenticeship program opportunities, while demonstrating the interest business and industry has in the workforce of tomorrow."

The competition phase of the conference involved leadership skills, such as prepared speeches and organizational abilities. The more than 60 hands-on events consisted of nearly every program area connected with career and technical education ranging from welding and carpentry to culinary arts and robotics.

Williams' specialty was cabinet making, an event where she, along with half a dozen other competitors, was given a blue print of the project they were to construct within a specific time allotment.

"It was tough, but I had a lot of fun competing," said Williams. "This kind of competition lets you know how you stack up against other students in the same program areas."

According to Phillippi, Williams is the first female, since his affiliation began with SkillsUSA in the 1970's, that has won this competitive event.

"I really didn't think too much about being the first girl to win," said Williams. "I just wanted to do the best I could."

Thanks to her abilities, Williams will get to make the trip to Kansas City in June and has earned a \$5000 scholarship to the New Hampshire Community and Technical Institute, a \$250 scholarship to Jefferson Community and Technical College and a DeWalt cordless drill.

Jeff McCarty is Williams' ATC instructor and said the state conference is a great confidence builder for all who attend, whether they win an event or not.

"I've seen so many students step up their abilities in preparing for this competition," he said. "They realize at this level there is no room for errors and they all gain something from the experience."

While promoting career and technical education is at the forefront of the conference, business and industry participants find it a stomping ground for prospective employees in the coming years.

“It has been projected that we shall be dealing with a shortage of approximately 40,000 welders within the next few years,” said Lou Vitucci, district sales manager for Lincoln Electric- a manufacturer of welding equipment and one of the sponsors of SkillsUSA.

“Industry and education must do all it can now to help alleviate this reality. SkillsUSA encourages the development of welders through its annual contests and, at the same time, helps to introduce the students to current technologies.”

From welders to cabinet makers, SkillsUSA has promoted technical education since 1965 when it was known as the Vocational Industrial Clubs of America, Inc. (VICA) In 1995 the name change came as a way to evolve with the future of the vocational education.

With all the excitement of the conference still fresh in her mind, Williams hasn't had much time think about her future. She's back to being that math whiz, only with an extra credential hanging near a cabinet that she probably built herself.



Automotive Technology Competition Spotlights State's Best Student Technicians

By: Tim Thornberry

FRANKFORT, Ky. (May 18, 2006) - Despite cloudy skies and cool temperatures, twenty automotive technology students from around the state answered the call to "Gentlemen, start your engines, if you can!" as the Ford-AAA Student Auto Skills state competition took place on May 12 at the Newport on the Levee parking lot.

The ten, two-man teams had 90 minutes to "debug" the 2006 Ford Escapes donated for use, all of which had the same identical problems.

Starting the engines was just the beginning of the many minor imperfections planted in each vehicle; problems ranging from a check-engine light to faulty brake lights.

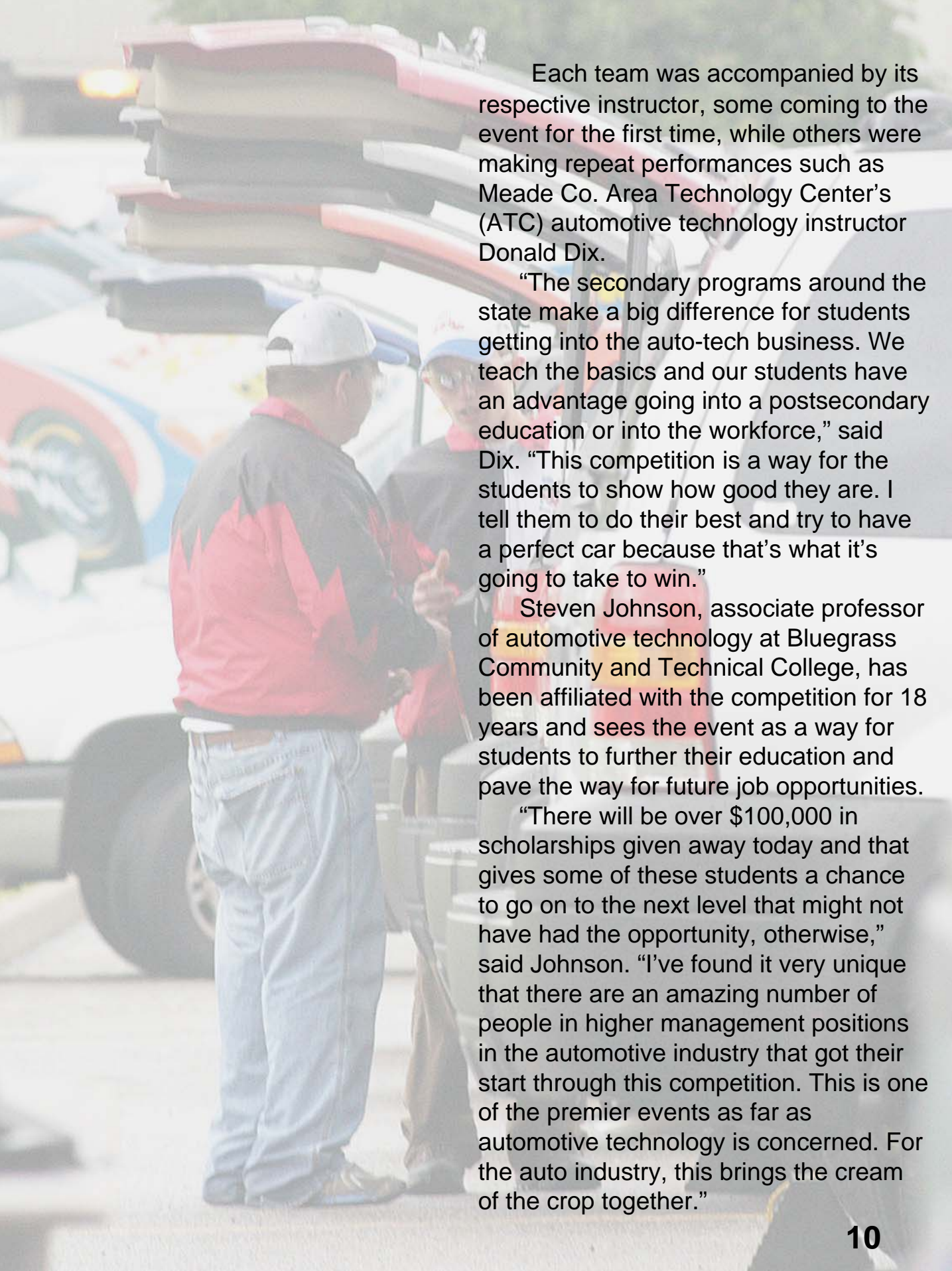
The team that spotted and corrected the most problems in the quickest time would prevail as the state winner and move on to the national competition to be held this June in Dearborn, Mich.

"Ford helps sponsor this contest in every state where the top four finishers get a scholarship to a Ford sponsored school," said Jeff Hazel, a Ford field service engineer from the Chicago market. "It's also a way to look for the best technicians we can find. That's the bottom line. We want the best technicians available to work in our Ford-Lincoln dealerships."

State auto technology students from secondary career and technical centers and programs first had to compete in regional hands-on competitions as well as taking written exams in an attempt to earn a trip to the state finals.

The Barren Co. ATC team got a little television time during the competition as many area stations covered the event.





Each team was accompanied by its respective instructor, some coming to the event for the first time, while others were making repeat performances such as Meade Co. Area Technology Center's (ATC) automotive technology instructor Donald Dix.

"The secondary programs around the state make a big difference for students getting into the auto-tech business. We teach the basics and our students have an advantage going into a postsecondary education or into the workforce," said Dix. "This competition is a way for the students to show how good they are. I tell them to do their best and try to have a perfect car because that's what it's going to take to win."

Steven Johnson, associate professor of automotive technology at Bluegrass Community and Technical College, has been affiliated with the competition for 18 years and sees the event as a way for students to further their education and pave the way for future job opportunities.

"There will be over \$100,000 in scholarships given away today and that gives some of these students a chance to go on to the next level that might not have had the opportunity, otherwise," said Johnson. "I've found it very unique that there are an amazing number of people in higher management positions in the automotive industry that got their start through this competition. This is one of the premier events as far as automotive technology is concerned. For the auto industry, this brings the cream of the crop together."

Once the competition ended, students and instructors gathered inside a local restaurant to share their stories, dine on pizza and await the presentation of trophies.

Sandra Guile, AAA public relations coordinator in Cincinnati made the announcement of the winners and said the competition benefits students and motorists.

“We are helping to give the kids an opportunity to pursue a career that is both fulfilling and enriching,” said Guile. “AAA has always been an advocate for the motorist and the safety of the motorist. This competition is a way to help the automotive industry provide high quality standards and safety for motorists by helping these students get the education they need to repair cars and make sure they’re running properly.”

The top five finishers were recognized during the awards presentation with first place honors going to the team from the Barren Co. ATC.

Students Ray Seabolt and Chad Mathews, along with their instructor Ray Hammer, accepted the trophy, along with prizes and scholarships for Seabolt and Mathews.

“These students worked extremely hard from the beginning of school just to qualify for the chance to make it to the hands-on competition,” said Hammer. “They made great decisions during the competition and that is what earned them a victory.”

“I can’t believe we won. It feels good to know that all of our hard work has paid off,” said Seabolt.

“Winning the Ford/AAA competition makes me feel like I am one of the best student technicians in the state,” said Mathews.



The competition placed participants in tight quarters in an effort to find and correct as many “bugs” as possible

He's right. The two now join an elite group of the newest and brightest automotive technicians in the country, not only on their way to a bigger and brighter competition, but on their way to a bigger and brighter future as well.

The other high schools and technical schools that participated in the competition included Allen Co.; Meade Co. ATC (2nd place); two teams from Eastside Technical Center (5th place for Instructor Robert Riddles team) in Lexington; Garrard Co. ATC; Wayne Co. ATC; Lake Cumberland ATC in Russell Co. (4th place); Hughes Jones/Harrodsburg ATC and Southern High School (3rd place) in Louisville.

<http://www.autoskills.com/index.jsp>



Barren Co. ATC's winning team consisted of, from left: Chad Mathews, Instructor Ray Hammer and Ray Seabolt.

First Auto Safety Awareness Day Held

By: Kitty Armstrong McAllister

FRANKFORT, Ky. (May 5, 2006)—Over forty students and instructors from secondary and postsecondary area schools joined together on Saturday, April 29, to kick-off a pilot project, Automobile Safety Awareness Day, in Campbellsville. Free auto safety checks, including tires, hoses, fluids, exhaust, engine and lights, were provided by the automotive technology departments at the Green County Area Technology Center (ATC) and the Elizabethtown Community and Technical College (ECTC).

Also on hand was AAA Kentucky Driver Training Instructor Bill Spaulding. “Automotive safety is a critical focus of AAA. We were delighted to be a part of this pilot project in Campbellsville and hope that similar programs in the state will be offered as a result of this pilot program,” Spaulding stated.

Every year, thousands of motorists are injured and hundreds are killed on Kentucky’s roadways.



Students from ECTC go over a list of items to check on each automobile.

“By offering free auto safety checks, we hope to make a contribution in our community by making an impact on auto safety. Through this program, drivers can learn about simple checks so their cars can run more efficiently and safely. We hope this will reduce accidents and make our roads safer. It’s a great opportunity for our students to interact and give back to the community,” stated Steve Gabehart, automotive technology instructor, Green County ATC.

Les Pike and Jerry Clemons, auto/diesel technology instructors, brought 31 ECTC students from their automotive program.

“We were pleased to be asked to join in this pilot project. It’s great experience for our students and an opportunity to partner with another school and learn from each other. We hope to be a part of others in the future,” stated Clemons.

The Automotive Safety Awareness Day was sponsored by Green County ATC, along with support from the ECTC auto/diesel technology department, AAA Kentucky and SkillsUSA. For more information about the pilot project or the automotive technology program, contact Principal Richard Atwell, Green County ATC, (270) 932-4263.



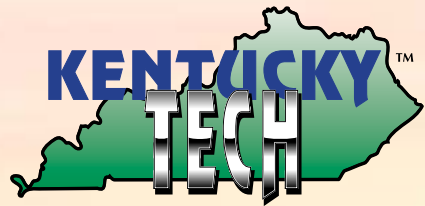
Steve Gabehart (right), automotive technology instructor, Green County ATC, promotes Automobile Safety Awareness Day in a live-remote interview with radio station Q104's Rob Collins.

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OCTE is an agency of the Education Cabinet's Department for Workforce Investment. OCTE administers 55 area technology centers, which are secondary schools that offer students hands-on training in business, graphics, construction, manufacturing, automotive and information technology fields and health and human services.

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